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DE RUEHJA #3479/01 3620622
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 280622Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7514
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4607
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1820
RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 0912
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1500
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3604
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1364
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2200
RUEHPT/AMCONSUL PERTH 0505
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 003479

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/PD
NSC FOR EPHU

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [KPAO](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: U.S. ELECTIONS -- OUTREACH TO ISLAMIC STUDENTS

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY: A group of approximately 45 students gathered at Pol/C's residence on December 27 for a forum devoted to the 2008 U.S. elections. Pol/C reviewed the presidential election process, while U.S. Library of Congress (LOC) Director discussed Congressional and gubernatorial races. The students--drawn mostly from Islamic universities--asked many questions about the process and policy views of the U.S. candidates. In the mock "Jakarta primary" ballot, Barack Obama overwhelmingly won on the Democratic side, while Rudy Giuliani was the GOP pick. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) On December 27, Mission hosted at San Francisco House, Pol/C's residence, roughly 45 Indonesian students for a discussion focused on the U.S. elections in 2008. PAO, U.S. LOC Director, and several other officers and FSNs participated in the event, which was also attended by Indonesian political consultants and professors. The students--about a third of whom were women--were drawn from:

- State Islamic University
- The Islamic Student Organization
- The Indonesian Association of Islamic Intellectuals
- The Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (affiliated with Nahdutul Ulama)
- Muhammadiyah Youth
- Muhammadiyah University Student Association
- Pesantran Students Communication Forum

(Note: Nahdutul Ulama and Muhammadiyah are the largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia with a combined membership of about 75 million.)

¶3. (U) Pol/C kicked off the event with a 20 minute PowerPoint presentation on the U.S. presidential election. Pol/C reviewed who was running on the Democratic and Republican sides. He also reviewed the caucus and primary schedule with a special focus on the January 3 Iowa caucus and the January 8 New Hampshire primary. Pol/C also discussed the political conventions, the general election on November 4, 2008, and the Electoral College system.

14. (U) U.S. LOC Director then reviewed the upcoming Congressional and gubernatorial races. He noted the current composition of the House and the Senate, and how control of both bodies would be up for grabs in 2008. He discussed the current leadership of both bodies, and the importance of the House and the Senate in formulating legislation and policy, including in the area of international relations.

15. (U) The question-and-answer session was lively, with the students asking many pointed, well-informed questions. Students asked about the possibility of the U.S. electing its first woman president. Another student wondered whether Barack Obama, an African American, could really win. Pol/C noted that Senator Obama was doing extremely well in the polls and was considered a first-tier candidate. A student asked about the role of the military in politics. LOC Director noted that the U.S. military was apolitical; personnel, however, were allowed to vote, which is not the case in Indonesia.

16. (U) A student asked about the Electoral College and whether it was undemocratic. LOC Director noted that there was a healthy debate in the U.S. over the Electoral College, though there were no serious efforts at this time to change it. Another student asked whether an independent candidate--perhaps Mayor Bloomberg of New York--might get into the race. Pol/C noted that that was possible, mentioning Ross Perot's campaigns in the 1990's. Students also wanted to know about the policy views of the candidates, including re Middle East issues.

17. (U) At the close of the event, a mock "Jakarta primary" was held with participants marking their favorite candidates using a sample ballot. On the Democratic side, Barack Obama overwhelmingly won the straw poll, while Rudy Giuliani won on the Republican side. (Note: Because he lived in Jakarta as a boy, Senator Obama is hugely popular in Indonesia.)

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